

**Moving Into the Curriculum**  
**Submitted by Jan Adams,**  
**Winston-Salem Forsyth Schools**

Few would disagree that active, participatory learning is desirable, yet so often, teachers shy away from it. Why? I would argue that the management of kids moving around in the classroom is a nightmare to many teachers. But dance provides a fun way to practice self-control. Through disciplined movement and a creative way of presenting material, students and teachers alike can enjoy more active learning situations.

**Management Techniques:**

✓ **Magic**

For kindergartners and first graders. I introduce the idea that dancers have “magic” in them that they must pay attention to and take with them when they move. Their magic will be lost if they use their voice, or bump into anyone or anything. For skeptical first graders, I admit that the magic is actually their “concentration,” which works like magic.

✓ **Elements of Control**

For second graders up, I tell the students that a dancer must have control of four things:

1. body and movement
2. mind (i.e. concentration or focus)
3. voice
4. space

I then ask the students with control of those four things to please raise a hand. If the hand is raised, the student may join me. If not, the student may not. The child then takes responsibility for his/her own management and control. For those who choose not to stand, I simply say, “please join in when you have gained control.” If a child loses control, I ask first, “Have you lost control of you\_\_\_\_\_?” This gives the child the opportunity to check him/herself. If he/she says yes, I ask him/her to sit until he/she regains it, but I let him/her be the judge when to rejoin us.

✓ **Movement Breaks**

This is a way to release and refocus energy in 8-10 minutes. It works well for the younger ones to expend their excess energy, and for the older ones (through middle school) to warm them up, psychologically, as well as physically, to participate in some group movement. The idea is to begin with some simple stretches and balances followed by strong shaking, pushing or pulling to tire out the muscles. Then follow with some relaxation exercises (mirroring or breathing).